

# Securing The Privileges Of Citizenship For Jews

## A Monument To Commemorate The Persistent Legislative Work Of Thomas Kennedy Stands In Rose Hill Cemetery In Hagerstown

By W. R. HAMILTON

IN Rose Hill Cemetery, Hagerstown, stands a monument erected by Jewish citizens of Maryland, chiefly Baltimoreans, to one of their benefactors, Thomas Kennedy, of Hagerstown, author of the amendment to the State Constitution, enacted in 1826, which gave adherents to the Jewish faith full privileges of citizenship theretofore denied. The monument is a granite obelisk on a large pedestal. McMaster says in his history:

Maryland, after a struggle of more than twenty years, opened her public offices to the Jews. From the day when her Constitution went into effect in 1776, every man appointed to any office of profit or trust must, before he entered on his duties, subscribe to a declaration of his belief in the Christian religion. Because of this restriction no Hebrew, no infidel, no free-thinker—no one who did not believe in the divinity of Jesus—could hold any political office or be an officer of the militia, or sit as a juror, or even practice law in Maryland. Over and over again the attempt was made to blow this remnant of the Middle Ages from the Constitution. But to amend it was no easy matter. A bill to alter it must pass the General Assembly, must be published three weeks before the next election, and be confirmed by the General Assembly, after a new election in the first session after such new election.

There was one man who thought it worth undertaking. He brought in a bill to alter the Constitution. . . . It failed. He tried again a second, a third and a fourth time. Then even his constituents turned from him and elected another representative in his place. Still he persevered until he became again a member of the Assembly—when his first act was once more to introduce the **Jew bill**. . . . At last prejudice was overcome by reason. The bill passed the Legislature in 1825; the confirmatory act in 1826.

The persevering legislator to whom McMaster refers without giving his name was Thomas Kennedy.

### ANOTHER VERSION

McMasters' narrative is slightly incorrect. Judge T. J. C. Williams' History of Washington County informs us that Kennedy's bill was first introduced in 1818 and defeated. Despite being bitterly assailed, Kennedy was reelected in 1818 and 1819. He was defeated in 1820, but not on account of the **Jew bill**. He was elected in 1821 and his bill passed by a slender margin in 1822. Kennedy was defeated again in 1822 on the Jew-bill issue. He was reelected in 1824, obtained the passage of his bill in 1825 and of the act confirming it in 1826.

The Kennedy amendment changed the oath by substituting requirement of belief in a future state of rewards and punishments for the previous requirement of belief in Christianity.

Thomas Kennedy was a native of Scotland. After a brief residence in Georgetown as bookkeeper for the Potomac Navigation Company, he went to Williamsport in 1797, became a prosperous merchant and shipped flour down the Potomac river to the sea-

board. He married Rosamund Thomas, of Frederick county. He published a book of poems in 1815, which included many patriotic and political ballads. He moved to Hagerstown in 1822 to educate his children. He was editor of the *Mail*—the Democratic weekly he had helped to start July 4, 1828, in the interests of Andrew Jackson—and was a State Senator when he died in the cholera epidemic of 1832.

### MONUMENT PLANS

He was buried in the Presbyterian graveyard, from which all bodies were removed in 1913. His granddaughter, Mrs. James Findlay, of Hagerstown, and her nephew, Frank Kennedy, of San Francisco, purchased a lot in Rose Hill Cemetery, where reinterment of Kennedy and his wife was made. War delayed plans for a monument, which had originated with Isidor S. Kahn, of Hagerstown. On June 1, 1919, the memorial was dedicated, with Leo Weinberg, of Frederick, and Rabbi Morris Lazaron, of Baltimore, as speakers.

Little is recorded of the election of 1822, except the bitter attacks on Kennedy. Fourteen appeared in one issue of a hostile newspaper. "Spoutings" were held at Cold Springs, a resort near Hagerstown, with bath house, ten-pin alleys, dancing hall, restaurant and barroom. Electioneering in those days invariably included "public dinners" and toasts.

Benjamin Galloway, an eccentric gentleman "with long white hair and a blue coat stuffed with newspapers and manuscripts," who halted passers-by and read to them his newspaper contribution headed the "Christian ticket" in Washington county of four candidates for the House of Delegates—and defeated the Kennedy four by 2-to-1 margin.

### NATIVE OF ENGLAND

Galloway is said to have been a native of England, graduate of Eton, friend of John Parke Curtis and visitor to Mount Vernon in 1772, member of the first Legislature of Maryland and first Attorney-General. He had been a resident of Annapolis. His occupation in Hagerstown, according to a local concern, was that of politician. He owned considerable property, lived in a fine stone residence near the Court House and kept many slaves in idleness.

Galloway said the Kennedy bill would promote infidelity and that Kennedy came from Scotland, where infidelity had made more progress than in any other land. He wanted no votes from Jews, Deists, Mohammedans or Unitarians. Another anti-Kennedy writer feared that 12,000,000 Jews from all over the world would come to this country and become our masters if allowed to hold offices. Kennedy was called a "Judas Iscariot," and "an enemy to Christianity." He was "one-half a Jew and the other half not a Christian." History is silent with respect to the replies of the Kennedy candidates, for they had no press.

No campaign, however, could be more vituperative than that of the Washington county Whigs against

Andrew Jackson and his supporters. In the Hagerstown *Torchlight* office the celebrated "coffin" handbills were printed from a wood cut supplied by a Winchester Whig. They depicted the coffins of six deserters executed by Jackson's orders, and told in doggerel rhyme how these men were "unjustly slaughtered and left destitute families." Another handbill showed Jackson thrusting his sword through Samuel Jackson at Nashville.

### POLITICAL BATTLING

The political animosities of this period developed early in 1827. In the summer of that year Washington county administration men had a meeting to plan for electing members of the State Legislature. Jackson's followers did likewise and appointed committees of vigilance and correspondence for each election district. The Jackson ticket won. Strange to say, Galloway had become a Jackson man. Thomas Kennedy, despite the fact that President Adams had named him as postmaster, was also a Jackson orator.

Over his own signature Galloway had denounced those who would attend an administration meeting as "two-legged swine." It incited an anonymous reply in a Whig paper, in which Galloway was called a "gray-headed slanderer, in principle a coward and in education an aristocrat," a Tory in the Revolution, a monarchist later, a traitor to his party, a compound of venality and iniquity and cold-hearted villainy.

Despite the fact that Nathaniel Rochester wrote a former Hagerstown neighbor that the election of Jackson would "lay the foundation for a military despotism," Jackson's two electors carried Washington county in 1828 by a majority of 344. Jackson's victory was celebrated by the firing of cannon. One exploded "and blew off the head of George Bowers." Another exploded and injured several persons.

### VISIT BY JACKSON

Jackson stopped at the Bell Tavern in Hagerstown Sunday, February 8, 1829, on his way to the White House, and received many calls from admirers. He and several fellow-travelers attended services at the Presbyterian Church. A month later the Whigs greeted Henry Clay with enthusiasm. Clay had married Lucretia Hart, daughter of Thomas Hart, of Hagerstown, after Hart's removal to Lexington, Ky., and he had many friends in his wife's former home. Houses and taverns were illuminated and the mechanics gave a banquet at the Globe Tavern, where Clay always stopped. The Democrats held an opposition banquet.

Jackson's next visit to Hagerstown was in June, 1830, when he was returning to Tennessee. His opposition to internal improvements and his dismissal of a Hagerstown citizen, Caspar Weyer, as superintendent of the National Road, alienated Western Marylanders. Whig newspapers mockingly spoke of the way in which the people shunned him. The Democratic version is missing because of the destruction of some *Mail* files in a Civil War raid on its office.

### CAMPAIGN OF 1832

When Clay came later a delegation went to Clearspring to escort him to Hagerstown and 120 mechanics marched to the Globe Tavern to be

among his callers. Mrs. Clay was with her husband.

In 1832, when Jackson was reelected, cholera was epidemic in Washington county. Nevertheless, we are told the campaign was waged energetically. Jackson was several hundred votes ahead in the county, but in the State the popular vote that year was very close. Electors, however, were chosen by districts. Clay got five and Jackson three of Maryland's eight.

No mention of the use of music in the earlier political campaigns appears in the histories. Hagerstown, however, had a band at this time, and "choirs" marched in parades. The custom of raising a tall pole with a streamer giving names of candidates at the top was in vogue for many years. Windows were illuminated with a multitude of candles and bonfires were kept burning on vacant lots. There was no public street lighting in Hagerstown until 1858, it is said.

When the Whigs had Gen. William Henry Harrison as their Presidential candidate their mood had become much more amiable, and the campaign of 1840 was spectacular and joyous. Down from Cumberland Harrison men rolled a large bunting-covered ball as they sang along the way the many songs for which the Harrison campaign was noted.

### THE HARRISON FLOAT

In the Harrison campaign in Western Maryland six white horses drew a float containing a log cabin, a barrel of hard cider and a raccoon from place to place, dispensing the favorite beverage of "Tippecanoe," and when Harrison stopped off in Hagerstown on his way to the White House he feast prepared for him included a cake weighing 112 pounds.

The Zachary Taylor campaign in 1848 was also one of melodious enthusiasm. The favorite Whig song then was one with this refrain:

Hurrah, hurrah! We think, with reason,  
That this will be a great coon season.

The raccoon had become the chief Whig emblem. It was inherited by the Republicans and appeared on their ballots, sitting on a fence and grasping a dead chicken, before the days of the Australian ballot law. Dead raccoons were tied to the end of wagons and kicked around in Democratic parades.